



Accomplishments vs. Attitude: When Stats Don't Tell the Whole Story

By Kevin McMullin, Collegewise Founder and President

The most successful, fulfilled people didn't get where they are through accomplishments alone. They paired their great drive to achieve with an equally great attitude. It's true in the workplace, and in college admissions.

You have two applicants with near-perfect GPAs. One is a grade grubber who only cares about getting the A, who whines for extra credit and will not hesitate to send his parents in to argue with the teacher on his behalf. The other is a curious learner who participates in class discussions and helps the student next to him with their trig troubles. Who would you admit?

You have two applicants who've done over 40 hours of community service. One did it so she could list the activity on her college applications, did the bare minimum asked of her, and amassed the time without exerting much effort. The other found an organization she cared about, constantly looked for new and better ways to contribute, and has a letter of recommendation from a supervisor raving about her work and lamenting how much the student will be missed when she leaves for college. Who would you admit?

Two applicants enjoyed successful varsity football careers. One cared more about his personal stats than he did about the team and constantly clashed with both coaches and teammates. The other won the Coach's Award for pairing positivity with his pads, and actually congratulated the talented incoming transfer to whom he lost his starting spot. Who would you admit?

Two students each had minor disciplinary infractions in high school. One complains about the punishment, and blames his cohorts for initiating the prank and the school for making an example out of him. The other gracefully accepts the blame, apologizes, and regrets that he didn't show better judgement. Who would you admit?

Two students have learning disabilities. One refuses to try, the other refuses to quit. Who would you admit?

One student constantly looks for people to blame for his shortcomings. The other constantly looks for people to thank for his successes. Who would you admit?

Attitude might not be everything in college admissions and in life. But while accomplishments aren't always entirely in your control, attitude is something that you get to choose.

Want more expert application tips from Kevin? Check out his blog at wiselikeus.com.

